

THE STAGE ABROAD.

The New Paris Opera House—Principles of the Construction of Theatres.

Has the Stage Degenerated—Its History and Progress.

PARIS THE CAPITAL OF PLEASURE.

Napoleon the Third as a Patron of Universal Art.

The German Indemnity Paid by French Plays.

RELATIVE SIZE OF EUROPEAN THEATRES.

Paris, Dec. 28, 1874.

The love of theatrical entertainment seems innate in the human race. It has existed in all countries and in all ages, taking probably its first form of representation in the dancing girl and its latest in the parliamentary assembly. There have always been and there always will be some people who are actors on the stage of life, and others who are fond of looking at them and listening to them. Theatres have been equally condemned by the Roman Catholic and by the Puritan clergy. There are many worthy persons who consider them an invention of the devil. It makes no sort of difference; the passion for them is so deeply rooted in the heart of man that they never can be put down by the most violent opposition, and the more they are opposed the more they are loved. The subject at all is to satisfy the desire for them, and to give dramatists and managers the means of producing their works in as noble a manner as to inspire respect rather than condemnation, and to make them a part of national education and the worthy school of national art. It is clear that, in order to give theatrical representations all the charm and value which may belong to them, they must be produced under conditions favorable to their development. This cannot be done if the actor is placed on a mean stage and amidst surroundings where he cannot be conveniently heard or seen. The principle of a good theatre, therefore, is to have commodious scenes and comfortable seats. Herein lies the first secret of the art of building a theatre; and when he has provided for the actors and audience it is still necessary that the building should be so constructed that the seats shall be divided in a manner to yield satisfactory pecuniary returns by their sale. Light, heat, ventilation and, finally, beauty, are all to be considered before the structure is complete. The reason why we have so many bad theatres in the world is that they have been generally built by speculators who were desirous of getting a large return for very little money, and therefore they boxed up actors and audience in a confined space in order that they might have large gains at small expense. Until very recently no kind of speculation was more hazardous than that connected with theatrical entertainments, and the practice of risking a lavish outlay upon them is quite new. Indeed, there was no public remuneration of investments of this kind till very recently, because it was an enterprise of considerable difficulty and not devoid of danger to wander about ill-lighted streets at midnight in bad weather to search for amusement, and even the men and women of the last generation preferred their own firesides, and playgoers were either very young or very rich. There were few theatres even in such places as Paris, London and Vienna, while some of the largest provincial cities in Europe had none at all. The immense audiences which now fill every well conducted house of entertainment, and every actor who is not contented with the few who come to see him, and who build the magnificent edifices which M. Garnier has raised upon it, with the prospect of getting one per cent upon the investment. It required the peremptory voice of imperial authority and the treasury of a great people to call it into being.

PARIS THE CAPITAL OF PLEASURE.

It has been a common practice among the opponents of the Second Empire to tax it with an extravagant waste of public money, and among the large sums said to have been thrown away on the useless embellishments of Paris none have been more severely criticised than those which were awarded for the building of the new opera house. But perhaps not one of the charges against Napoleon III. was more unjust. Paris is the capital of pleasure, and it is not surprising that it should be so. Rich idlers from all countries go to Paris, because they can there purchase pleasure, not only of a better quality, but much cheaper than elsewhere, and any French government which is not willing to oblige them is not willing to oblige the world in the matter of public entertainments. The greater the funs employed for this purpose may be the greater will assuredly be the profits arising from them. Over and over again parsimonious and silly administrators have desired to withdraw the subsidies allowed to the Opera, the Theatre Francaise and the Odéon. Fortunately for Paris they have never been able to carry their purpose into effect, and now under the Republic, whether all the world records against them, the subsidy given to the opera is to be largely increased.

GOVERNMENT SUBSIDIES TO THEATRES.

If the three national theatres in France were not subsidized every playhouse in the country would be given over to burlesque and extravaganzas, not even so noble a piece as M. Sardou's "La Haine" having paid its expenses. It was Brillat-Savarin who said that French cooks and foreign epicures had paid the cost of the Napoleonic wars which ended at Waterloo. Certainly French cooks and their customers have had no small part in liquidating the enormous indemnity lately demanded by Germany, and of which not one cent now remains to the French actors and actresses, milliners and dressmakers have done the rest, and the suspicious task has all been accomplished in three years. France is now richer than ever, while there has been a monetary panic in Germany. Gold has again come into circulation here, and the twenty-franc notes have been called in, while notes of less than a dollar in value still circulate in Germany. German paper can only be cashed at a heavy discount abroad. French paper bears a premium in Belgium and Berlin, while even in England it is quoted a mere fraction below par. If pleasures, rightly controlled and administered, can work such wonders as this, it is certain that they form the chief part of French national wealth and deserve all the care and attention which can possibly be paid to them.

RELATIVE SIZE OF EUROPEAN THEATRES.

It is not worth while to compare the new Paris opera house with the principal theatres of Europe. The Royal Theatre, at Antwerp, contains 1,320 places, and the maximum of its receipts nightly is \$1,000. The Royal Opera, at Berlin, contains 1,720 places; maximum receipts, \$1,400. The Grand Theatre, at Bordeaux, 1,300 places; maximum receipts, \$100. The Theatre Royal, Cologne, 1,400 places; maximum receipts, \$700. Theatre Royal, Dublin, 2,000 places; maximum receipts, \$1,250. Theatre of the City of Frankfurt, 1,210 places; receipts, \$500. Theatre Carlo Felice at Genoa, 2,000 places; receipts, \$640. Theatre of the City of Hamburg, 1,850 places; receipts, \$900. Theatre Royal of Hanover, 1,920 places; receipts, \$1,160. Theatre of San Carlo, at Lisbon, 2,000 places; receipts, \$1,100. Covent Garden Theatre, in London, 2,400 places; receipts, \$7,000. Theatre of Mayence, 1,675 places; receipts, \$735. Theatre of La Scala, at Milan, 3,000 places; receipts, \$1,800. Grand Theatre of Moscow, 1,840 seats; receipts, \$5,000. Theatre Royal, at Munich, 3,300 seats; receipts, \$1,075. Opera House at Stockholm, 1,063 places; receipts, \$600. Theatre Royal, at Stuttgart, 1,900 seats; receipts, \$728. Theatre Royal, at Turin, 2,000 seats; receipts, \$888. Grand Theatre, at Warsaw, 1,118 seats; receipts, \$750. Theatre de la Fenice, at Venice, 2,000 seats; receipts, \$1,728. New Opera House, at Vienna, 2,400 seats; receipts, \$2,700.

THE NEW OPERA HOUSE IN PARIS.

contains 2,521 seats. The old opera house only contained 1,850 seats, and there is, moreover, a difference between them, that the seats of the new opera house are much larger. The prices of seats will be as follows:—

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